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P 011145Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2530
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2230
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0978
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 1140
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2929
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 0529
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1264
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4961
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1968
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0250
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000402

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR, LA PAZ FOR A/DCM C LAMBERT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: SANTO DOMINGO ECONOMIC-POLITICAL ROUNDUP, MARCH
31, 2009

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[1. \(SBU\) Chevron Settles Dispute with Union Drivers](#)

On March 26, Chevron signed an agreement with the drivers' union that blockaded its operation in June 2008 in protest to a change in the fuel delivery contract which led to the loss of their jobs. As part of the agreement, Chevron provided compensation to 38 drivers and the drivers promised not to blockade Chevron in the future. Chevron's Manager for Caribbean Global Downstream, Hector Infante, told the Charge that the union approached the company in January to request a settlement after the company's original offer had expired at the end of 2008. Infante said that the drivers' union was having trouble with the truck owners, who were holding out for a contract extension, and decided to seek a separate settlement. Infante confirmed that Chevron has been operating successfully under the new fuel delivery contract, but that it was still waiting for operating permits for four new trucks even though they had been approved two years ago. He said Chevron told the GODR the settlement could not be finalized until the licenses had been issued.

[2. \(SBU\) First Arrests Made Under 2007 Electricity Theft Law](#)

Two individuals were arrested for electricity theft on March 19, one month after the Superintendent of Electricity announced that the 2007 law criminalizing this theft had gone into effect. The arrests, the first to invoke the new law, occurred when the pair was caught in the act of making an illegal connection to benefit a small hotel in Santo Domingo.

The arrests garnered substantial press attention, including an editorial in the El Caribe newspaper that called them "a healthy and responsible carriage of justice." The fact that police caught the thieves in the act makes the case less of a test of the new law, however. This precedent will be established only when illicit electricity consumers are

detected and subjected to justice. The general manager of the electricity distribution company Ede Este told ECONOFF that he has submitted the names of five large-scale thieves to the Superintendent for what he hopes will represent a high-profile crackdown on the illicit activity.

13. (U) GoDR Energy Officials Receptive to Proposed Regional Partnership

During a visit to the DR on March 18-19, Samuel Browne from the Office of Policy and International Affairs at the U.S. Department of Energy met with key players in the energy sector from the GoDR and private companies. Among other topics, he discussed USG plans to introduce an Energy Partnership in the Americas, along the lines of a speech that President Obama made during the 2008 presidential campaign. The public sector officials were receptive to the partnership, noting that better regional coordination in energy matters could help energy importers like the Dominican Republic develop its nascent renewable energy industry and better absorb the impacts of volatile energy prices. Browne invited the GoDR policymakers to provide input on developing the architecture of the partnership, but the officials' response was limited to seeking assistance for their agencies' pet projects.

14. (SBU) Government Caught in Orwellian Incident

In his March 26 column in "Clave Digital," former Ambassador to the U.S. Bernardo Vega reported on the Government's unusual efforts to promote foreign investment. Vega described an incident in which the Government bought space in

a magazine and then touted the advertisement as if it were an unbiased news article: "Since the times of the dictator Trujillo nothing like it has occurred. Our government announced with great fanfare that the February 22 New York Times Magazine had said marvelous things about the economic situation in our country. Later, the Minister of Industry bought a full-page advertisement in a local newspaper to tout the great success. What had happened is that, with taxpayers' funds, the government had purchased an announcement in the magazine. Why does the government try to fool the Dominican people? They should be ashamed of themselves."

15. (U) Think Tank Event Publicizes Dominican-Haitian Cooperation

A recent event held at Fundacion Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE), a think tank founded by President Fernandez, highlighted activities organized by NGOs that are helping the Dominican and Haitian people engage each other and pursue common goals. At the forum, attended by CONOFF, Panelists described the "First Dominican-Haitian Youth Encounter," in which 124 participants exchanged ideas on the evolution of their societies. A "Special Dominican-Haitian Task Force on the Millennium Development Goals and Youth" brought 20 people together to examine the development goals and joint strategies to attain them. Finally, participants in the FUNGLODE event noted that two additional events are planned for April and May, the "Dominican-Haitian Diaspora Youth Forum" and the "Haitian Model UN Conference."

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